DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 206 361 JC 810 518

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TITLE A Workshop on Improving Community Relations through Increased Faculty Involvement.
INSTITUTION Okaloosa-Walton Junior Coll., Niceville, Fla.
PUB DATE [80]
NOTE 16p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attitude Change; *College Faculty; Community Colleges; Educational Benefits; Parent Attitudes; *Public Relations; *School Community Relationship; Student Problems; *Teacher Participation; Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

Prepared for use in an instructor workshop, this booklet suggests ways community college instructors can become more actively involved in community relations. After a statement of purpose and a delineation of participant objectives, the booklet describes how the workshop is to be conducted (i.e., using a lecture, discussion, and question-and-answer format) and evaluated. The booklet then defines community relations as the composite of all those on-going processes undertaken to gain, nurture, and maintain the support, respect, interest, and awareness of the community being served. Next, nine factors which inhibit positive community relations are enumerated, and general strategies and information instructors can use to overcome each of these factors are suggested. These factors are: (1) concern over the quality of education; (2) parental bias toward the institution they attended; (3) unjustified fears of failing and of time and job conflicts; (4) ineffective high school counseling; (5) competition from other public and private schools; (6) difficult enrollment and admissions procedures; (7) class scheduling problems; (8) the rising cost of education; and (9) lack of awareness about the college. The booklet concludes with three lists of specific activities for establishing and nurturing contacts in the community, developing community relations materials, and implementing community relations activities. (AYC)

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A workshop on

IMPROVING COMMUNITY RELATIONS

through increased

FACULTY INVOLVEMENT

Prepared By: David L. Goetsch

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PREFACE

Historically, the primary function of a community college instructor has been to provide quality instruction in the classroom. This has not and will not change. Our foremost responsibility has always been, is now, and will always be quality instruction. However, a number of factors such as a declining birthrate, increased competition from private education, and adverse publicity in the media over the state of the nation's educational system have begun to impact on our profession. This impact has added another dimension to the community college instructor's job--community relations.

Never before in the history of the community college system has community relations and the instructor's involvement in community relations been so critical. For instructors, community relations means many things. It means constantly seeking new and better ways to serve the community, always providing the highest quality instruction possible, going out into the community to spread the word about education, and insuring that you represent your institution in the most positive light whenever among community members.

This workshop was designed from a how-to rather than a philisophical perspective. It will assume that increased instructor involvement in community relations efforts is both proper and desireable. Based on this premise, it will deal only with how community college instructors can become more actively involved in community relations to the benefit of the community, the profession, the institution, and themselves.

The workshop is designed to last 90 minutes, during which time it is expected that there will be a maximum amount of participant involvement and interaction. Questions, responses, and constructive criticism from participants are encouraged. The workshop has been designed for maximum participant/presenter and participant/participant interaction.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this workshop is to help community college isntructors learn how to become more effective participants in their institution's community relations efforts. This will involve identifying those factors which impact on community colleges in a negative way and developing effective community relations practices for overcoming these factors. The instructor, then, becomes an important agent in carrying out these practices.

PARTICIPANT OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the workshop participants will be able to do the following:

1. Define community relations.

2. List those factors which have the most negative impact on good school/community relations.

3. List several strategies that instructors can use to overcome, or at least minimize, the negative impact of these factors.

DELIVERY SYSTEM

The delivery system for the workshop will be lecture-discussion-question-answer. The presenter will outline the scope and sequence of the workshop through the use of overhead transparencies. They will initiate instruction and facilitate discussion among participants, questions from participants, and answers from themselves and participants. The workshop has been designed to allow for maximum participant input and involvement.

EVALUATION

1. In order to evaluate their learning, participants will be asked to demonstrate attainment of the objectives by completing an objective evaluation.

2. In order to evaluate the workshop, participants will be asked to complete a workshop evaluation form.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS DEFINED

The composite of all those on-going processes undertaken to gain, nurture, and maintain the support, respect, interest, and awareness of the community being served. The community served by a community college is dichotomous and consists of such groups as parents, high school students, employed practitioners in business and industry, unskilled or unemployed people in need of job skills training, military personnel, corrections personnel, government personnel, civic, church, and social groups, and professional organizations.

FACTORS WHICH INHIBIT POSITIVE COMMUNITY RELATIONS

1. Lack of awareness about the community college on the part of the community.
2. The rising cost of education.
3. Class scheduling problems.
4. Difficult enrollment and admissions procedures.
5. Competition from other institutions, public and private.
6. Ineffective high school counseling.
7. Unjustified fears (failing, time involved, work-school conflicts).
8. Parental bias.
9. Concern over the quality of education available.

On the following pages, each of these inhibitors will be treated separately. The inhibitor will be listed and given a brief explanation. Specific strategies instructors can use to overcome the inhibitor will then be listed. These strategies will serve as the focal points for discussion and questions.

CONCERN OVER QUALITY OF EDUCATION

AS LONG AS WE SPREAD THE WORK AND MAINTAIN OUR CURRENT STANDARDS OF PRACTICE, THIS IS NOT A PROBLEM FOR US. IN FACT, OUR GUARANTEE OF QUALITY EDUCATION IS OUR PRIMARY SELLING POINT.

PARENTAL BIAS

ALUMNI OF CERTAIN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OFTEN WANT THEIR CHILDREN TO FOLLOW IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS. THIS CAN BE DEALT WITH BY:

1. SONS AND DAUGHTERS CAN STILL FOLLOW PARENTS AFTER GRADUATION FROM OUR INSTITUTION.

2. IT IS LESS EXPENSIVE TO GO TWO YEARS WITH US AND TWO YEARS WITH THE FAVORED UNIVERSITY.

3. BETTER INSTRUCTION AND SMALLER CLASSES DURING THE FIRST TWO YEARS WITH US SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED AS A PLUS.

4. OUR INSTITUTION WILL GIVE SONS AND DAUGHTERS TWO YEARS TO SEE IF THEY ARE SERIOUS ABOUT COLLEGE BEFORE GOING ON TO A UNIVERSITY.

UNJUSTIFIED FEARS

1. Listen to community members and make note of their fears.

2. Emphasize our diversified scheduling process: day and night classes, weekend classes, Monday and Friday evening classes.

3. Explain the availability of financial aid, loans, grants, scholarships, and student assistantships to help defray the cost of an education.

4. Explain that although our standards are high, most students do not fail and that formal tutoring is available.

LIAISON WITH HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS

1. GET TO KNOW EVERY HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELLOR IN EVERY HIGH SCHOOL IN OUR DISTRICT AND NURTURE THE RELATIONSHIP.

2. KEEP COUNSELLORS INFORMED ABOUT OUR INSTITUTION AND YOUR SPECIFIC PROGRAM OR AREA.

3. MAKE SURE THAT COUNSELLORS ARE KEPT WELL SUPPLIED WITH INFORMATION AND MATERIALS ABOUT OUR INSTITUTION (CATALOGUES, SCHEDULES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, ETC.).

4. OFFER TO VISIT STUDENT GROUPS IN NEED OF COUNSELLING OR INFORMATION ABOUT OUR INSTITUTION.

5. INVITE COUNSELLORS TO OUR CAMPUS FOR VISITATIONS.

6. ACCEPT INVITATIONS TO THEIR SCHOOLS TO LEARN ABOUT THEIR SPECIAL PROBLEMS.

COMPETITION WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

1. EMPHASIZE THE QUALITY OF OUR INSTITUTION--THIS IS OUR BEST SELLING POINT.

2. PROVIDE MORE FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING THAN OTHER INSTITUTIONS.

3. PROVIDE FOLLOW-UP INFORMATION ON SUCCESSFUL GRADUATES AND PUBLICIZE IT.

4. MAKE PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS AND THE PUBLIC FEEL MORE WELCOME ON OUR CAMPUS THAN AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS------SMILE AND THINK HUMAN RELATIONS.

DIFFICULT ENROLLMENT AND ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES

1. CONSTANTLY SEEK WAYS TO SIMPLIFY AND IMPROVE OUR ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES.

2. LISTEN TO STUDENTS DURING REGISTRATION AND MAKE NOTE OF COMPLAINTS OR DIFFICULTIES.

3. BE ATTENTIVE TO PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS CARRYING "HOW-TO" ARTICLES ON IMPROVING THE ENROLLMENT AND ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES.

4. BE ATTENTIVE TO METHODS USED IN OTHER INSTITUTIONS THAT WE MIGHT ADOPT.

CLASS SCHEDULING PROBLEMS

1. EXAMINE FEASIBILITY OF MORE AFTERNOON, SATURDAY, MONDAY NIGHT, AND EVEN FRIDAY NIGHT CLASSES IN YOUR AREA.

2. DURING REGISTRATION, KEEP A RUNNING TALLY OF STUDENTS WHO WERE TURNED AWAY FROM CLOSED CLASSES TO IDENTIFY WHERE MORE SECTIONS MIGHT BE ADDED IN THE FUTURE.

3. EACH TIME YOU WRITE YOUR SCHEDULE, ASK YOURSELF: "IS THIS SCHEDULE WRITTEN FOR MY BENEFIT AND CONVENIENCE OR FOR THE STUDENTS?"

RISING COST OF EDUCATION

1. FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS.

2. EMPHASIZE THE DIFFERENCE IN COST BETWEEN OUR INSTITUTION AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS.

3. POINT OUT OUR DIVERSIFIED SCHEDULING WHICH ALLOWS FOR WORKING PART TIME AND GOING TO SCHOOL FULL TIME OR VICE-VERSA.

4. FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH STUDENTS ASSISTANT-SHIPS, ETC.

LACK OF COMMUNITY AWARENESS ABOUT OUR INSTITUTION

THIS IS THE BIGGEST PROBLEM OF ALL AND IT WILL TAKE ALL OF OUR EFFORTS ON A CONTINUOUS BASIS TO OVERCOME THIS INHIBITOR. EACH OF US--IN WHATEVER WAY WE ARE MOST EFFECTIVE AND MOST COMFORTABLE--MUST BECOME A POSITIVE REPRESENTATIVE OF OUR INSTITUTION IN THE COMMUNITY AND AN EDUCATION RECRUITER.

SOME THINGS WE CAN DO ARE:

1. Establish and nurture contacts in the community:

   a. High school teachers, counsellors, occupational specialists, department chairs, and administrators.

   b. Vocational Rehabilitation personnel.

   c. CETA counsellors.

   d. Base Education personnel.

   e. State employment service personnel.

   f. Civic, social, church, and parent group members.

2. Develop community relations software:

   a. Posters for bulletin boards.

   b. Letter size brochures for mailing.

   c. Taped interviews with students and graduates.

   d. Slide/cassette presentations.

   e. Overhead transparencies for guest speaking engagements.

   f. Scrapbooks.

   g. Placement record display boards.

   h. Want Ad displays showing job opportunities.

   i. Radio public service announcements.

3. Implementing Community Relations Activities

   a. Visit your contacts several times each school year.

   b. Serve as guest speaker for high school, civic, military, and parent groups at every opportunity.

   c. Speak to job seekers at employment office.

   d. Place posters and brochures strategically in the community.

   e. Accompany counselling personnel on their visits to high schools.

   f. Send personal letters to high school seniors and their parents.

   g. Provide local newspaper and high school newspapers with human interest stories about students now attending our institution.

   h. Participate in information booths in shopping malls and county fairs.

THINK COMMUNITY RELATIONS!